NUMB. CCCCXLI.

The SPECTATOR.

Si fractus illabatur orbis
Impavidum ferient ruinæ. Hor.

Saturday, July 26. 1712.

MAN, considered in himself is a very helpless and a very wretched Being. He is subject every Moment to the greatest Calamities and Misfortunes. He is beset with Dangers on all sides, and may become unhappy by numberless Casualties, which he could not foresee, nor have prevented, had he foreseen them.

It is our Comfort, while we are obnoxious to so many Accidents, that we are under the Care of one who directs Contingencies, and has in his Hands the Management of every Thing that is capable of annoying or offending us, who knows the Assistance we stand in need of, and is always ready to bestow it on those who ask it of him.

The natural Homage, which such a Creature bears to so infinitely Wise and Good a Being, is a firm Reliance on him for the Blessings and Conveniencies of Life, and an habitual Trust in him for Deliverance out of all such Dangers and Difficulties as may befall us.

The Man, who always lives in this Disposition of Mind, has not the same dark and melancholly Views of Human Nature, as he who considers himself abstractedly from this Relation to the Supreme Being. At the same time that he reflects upon his own Weakness and Imperfection, he comforts himself with the Contemplation of those Divine Attributes, which are employed for his Safety and his Welfare. He finds his want of Foresight made up by the Omniscience of him who is his Support. He is not sensible of his own want of Strength, when he knows that his Helper is Almighty. In short, the Person who has a firm Trust on the Supreme Being is Powerful in *his* Power, Wise by *his* Wisdom, Happy by *his* Happiness. He reaps the Benefit of every Divine Attribute, and loses his own Insufficiency in the Fullness of infinite Perfection.

To make our Lives more easy to us, we are commanded to put our Trust in him, who is thus able to relieve and succour us; the Divine Goodness having made such a Reliance a Duty, notwithstanding we should have been miserable had it been forbidden us.

Among several Motives, which might be made use of to recommend this Duty to us, I shall only take notice of those that follow.

The first and strongest is, that we are promised, He will not fail those who put their Trust in him.

But without considering the Supernatural Blessing which accompanies this Duty, we may observe that it has a natural Tendency to its own Reward, or in other words, that this firm Trust and Confidence in the great Disposer of all Things, contributes very much to the getting clear of any Affliction, or to the bearing it manfully. A Person who believes he has his Succour at hand, and that he acts in the sight of his Friend, often exerts himself beyond his Abilities, and does Wonders that are not to be matched by one who is not animated with such a Confidence of Success. I could produce Instances from History of Generals, who out of a Belief that they were under the Protection of some invisible Assistant, did not only encourage their Soldiers to do their utmost, but have acted themselves beyond what they would have done, had they not been inspired by such a Belief. I might in the same manner shew how such a Trust in the Assistance of an Almighty Being, naturally produces Patience, Hope, Chearfulness, and all other Dispositions of Mind that alleviate those Calamities which we are not able to remove.

The Practice of this Virtue administers great Comfort to the Mind of Man in times of Poverty and Affliction,

fliction, but moſt of all in the Hour of Death. When the Soul is hovering in the laſt Moments of its Diſſolution, when it is juſt entring on another State of Exiſtence, to converſe with Scenes, and Objects, and Companions that are altogether new, what can ſupport her under ſuch tremblings of Thought, ſuch Fear, ſuch Anxiety, ſuch Apprehenſions, but the caſting of all her Cares upon him who firſt gave her Being, who has conducted her through one Stage of it, and will be always with her to Guide and Comfort her in her Paſſage through Eternity?

David has very beautifully repreſented this ſteady Reliance on God Almighty in his twenty third Pſalm, which is a kind of *Paſtoral* Hymn, and filled with thoſe Alluſions which are uſual in that kind of Writing. As the Poetry is very exquiſite, I ſhall preſent my Reader with the following Tranſlation of it.

I.

The Lord my Paſture ſhall prepare,
And feed me with a Shepherd's Care:
His Preſence ſhall my Wants ſupply,
And guard me with a watchful Eye;
My Noon-day Walks he ſhall attend,
And all my midnight Hours defend.

II.

When in the ſultry Glebe I faint,
Or on the thirſty Mountain pant;
To fertile Vales and dewy Meads,
My weary wand'ring Steps he leads;
Where peaceful Rivers ſoft and ſlow,
Amid the verdant Landskip flow.

III.

Tho' in the Paths of Death I tread,
With gloomy Horrors over-ſpread;
My ſteadfaſt Heart ſhall fear no Ill,
For thou, O Lord, art with me ſtill;
Thy friendly Crook ſhall give me Aid,
And guide me through the dreadful Shade.

IV.

Tho' in a bare and rugged Way,
Through devious lonely Wilds I ſtray,
Thy Bounty ſhall my Pains beguile:
The barren Wilderneſs ſhall ſmile
With ſudden Greens and Herbage crown'd,
And Streams ſhall murmur all around.

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